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ABSTRACT

Word processing, a systematic approach to office work, is currently based on the use of sophisticated dictating and typing machines. The word processing market is rapidly increasing with the paper explosion brought on by such factors as increasing governmental regulation, Internal Revenue Service requirements, and the need for stockholders to be better informed. In the past, keeping up with the paper explosion has meant hiring more people, but the future will see increased staff productivity as the major way of keeping up. As automation takes places in dictation, typing, micrographics, reprographics, and record retrieval, schools will be required to prepare people who can function in this new environment, including individuals to operate the machinery and managers and executives who will be charged with the responsibility of planning effective use of the equipment. (Suggestions are presented to help business educators design their curricula to meet the needs of the word processing office.) (TJ)

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WORD PROCESSING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS COURSES

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A concept has been emerging on the business scene in the last decade. This concept is called word processing. What is word processing? Is it the same as data processing? These are questions that many educators are beginning to ask. Word processing is a systematic approach to office work. Just as data processing is the handling or processing of numbers, word processing is the handling or processing of words. Processing of words is nothing new. The ancient Egyptians engaged in word processing when they conceived and wrote primitive symbols on the walls of tombs. The great religious writers practiced word processing with quill and ink. Words have been processed for as long as people have been communicating ideas. Then why all this fuss about word processing? Simply because word processing is a system which involves the coordination of people, procedures and equipment. It is the systematizing of office procedures, along with magnetic typewriting equipment which has been designed to expedite work.

The term word processing was coined by the IBM Germany Office Products sales force in 1965 and was slowly but surely adopted by the domestic group within a year or two afterwards. The IBM Office Products Division sales force was, at that time, in the process of being converted from a purely hardware oriented

electric typewriter sales group to a multi-product sales force. With dictation equipment and an automatic typewriter known as the magnetic tape selectric typewriter, the term word processing offered two distinct advantages to the Office Products salesperson: (1) It allowed him to bundle his products under one umbrella on a sales call and talk in a conceptual manner, rather than strictly about each and every piece of hardware; and (2) at the same time, he was able to take advantage of IBM's prestigious position in the marketplace in the area of data processing. The typewriter division hoped it could tag along on the tails of its older brother. With the introduction of the MTST (magnetic tape selectric typewriter), it was found that a letter needed to be typed only once. Because of this, secretarial productivity rose considerably. As production increased, secretarial personnel were able to take on other necessary responsibilities. In the years subsequent to the initial introduction of this early word processing equipment, many competitors have entered the marketplace--Xerox, Radactron, Vydec, Lexitron and others are competing for their share of the word processing market. Today, we find word processing machines with CRT (cathode ray tubes) screens, as well as with computer interface.

Word processing in the past has been looked upon as a centralized typing pool. Many office people looked upon word

processing with fear, uncertainty, and rejection. Today, word processing is much more than the old original typing pool concept (Figure 1). Many different types of positions are found in a word processing center. A more realistic description is word processing office systems (WPOS). This approach effectively implements the three cost elements of people, machines, and facilities for the purpose of providing typewriting support. Equipment alone has only about a 5% effect on improving office efficiency. Therefore, any gains in productivity which merely concentrate on equipment will only become significant in the long run. However, when using a WPOS approach, people at all levels begin to participate in the change. Good communication, documented need and identified benefits are required. Equipment becomes a tool to implement an efficient office operation (Figure 2). Cost justification is obtained via successfully coordinating personnel, equipment, facilities in a systematic way. Some of the skills required by secretarial support people in a word processing environment are presented in Figure 3.

One of the problems that has a negative impact on the successful implementation of the word processing concept within a company is that of people's attitudes. The attitudes of people are formed by a number of complex variables. It is the interrelationship of these variables which determines the employee's attitudes toward her/his jobs. For example, how a person views her/his work--prestige, title importance,

PRESENT WORD PROCESSING CONCEPT

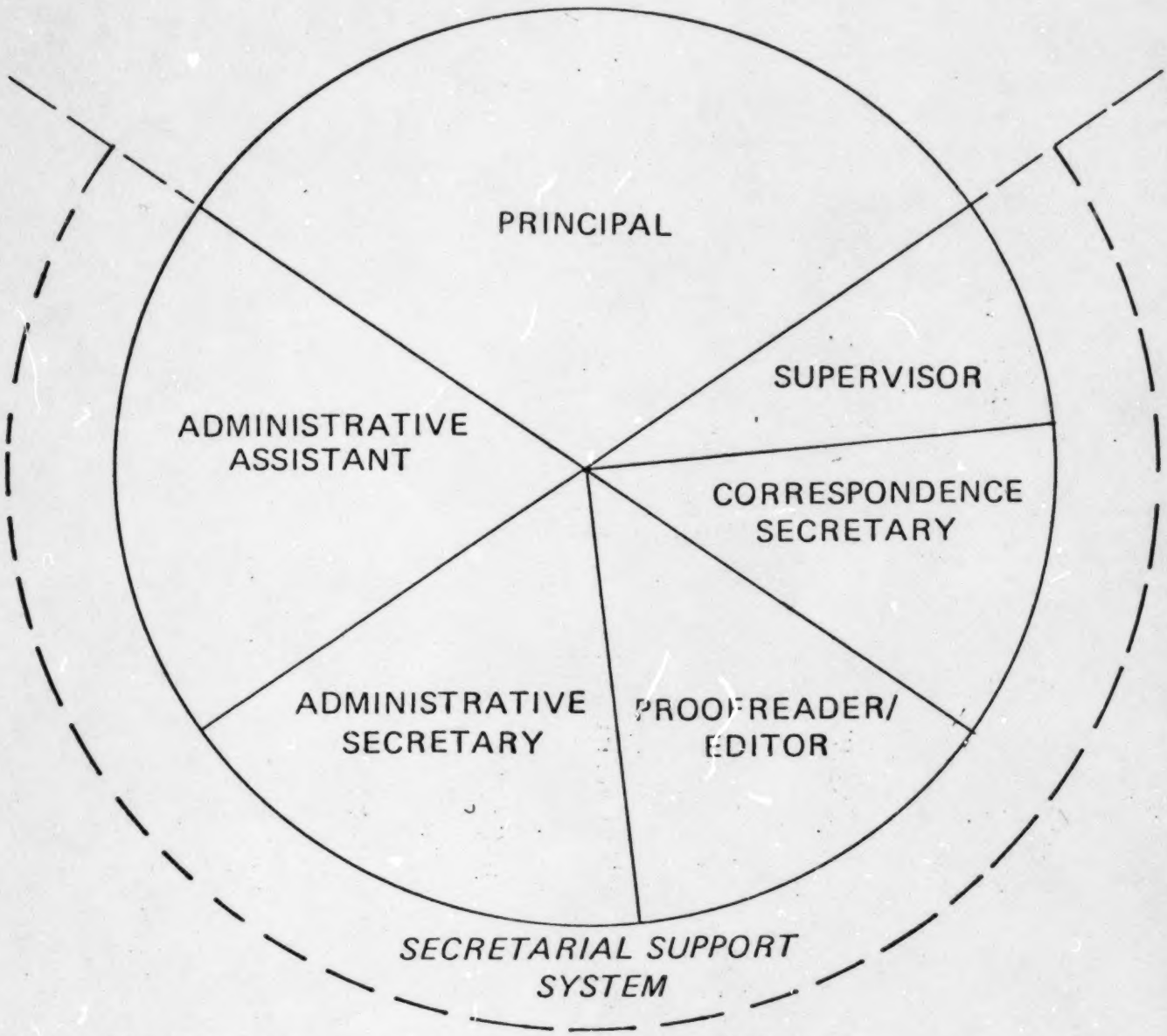

Figure 1

WORD PROCESSING/ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SYSTEM

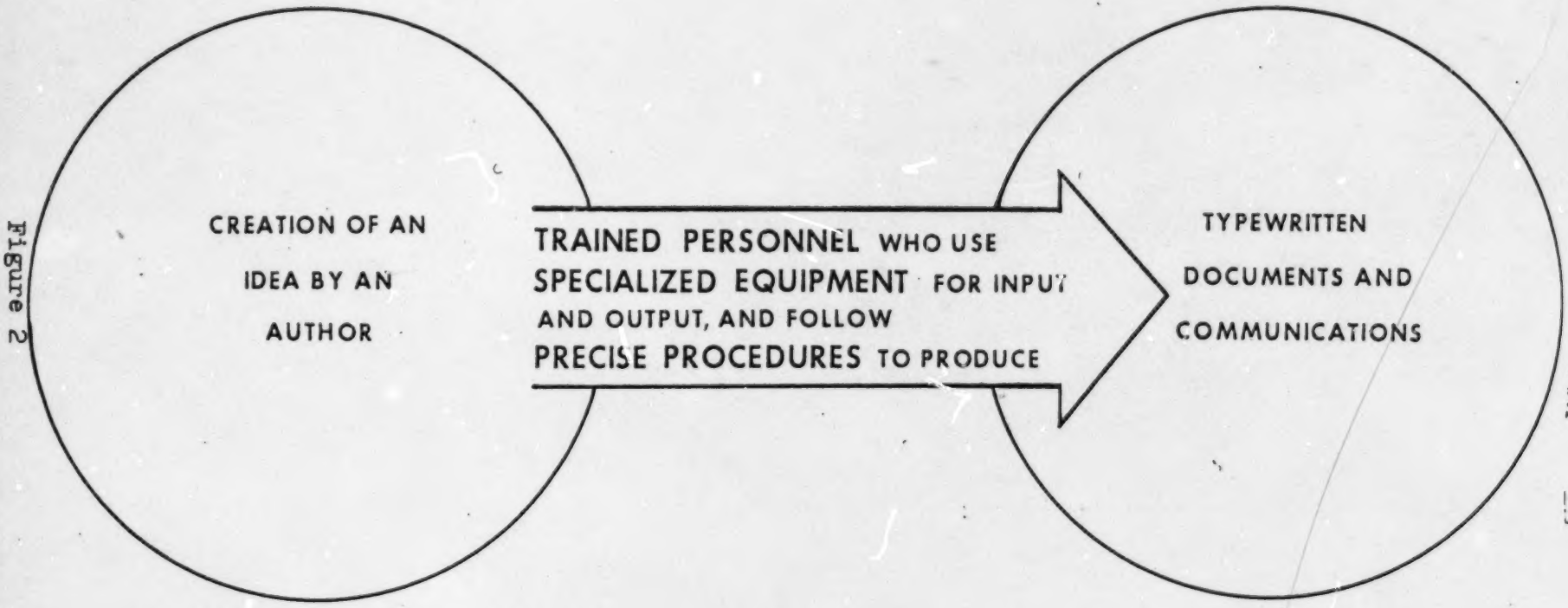
CREATION OF AN IDEA BY AN AUTHOR
TRAINED PERSONNEL WHO USE SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT FOR INPUT AND OUTPUT, AND FOLLOW PRECISE PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE
TYPEWRITTEN DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Figure 2

IMPACT OF WORD PROCESSING CONCEPT

NEW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

CORRESPONDENCE

- MACHINE TRANSCRIPTION
- MAG MEDIA KEYBOARDS
- DICTATION EQUIPMENT
- MAGNETIC MEDIA FILING/ LOGGING SYSTEMS
- STANDARD MARGINS/ TAB GRIDS
- LANGUAGES

ADMINISTRATIVE

- RESEARCHING INFORMATION
- ANALYZING DATA
- CALENDARS
- TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS
- ORIGINATION OF CORRESPONDENCE
- ARRANGING MEETINGS
- SETTING PRIORITIES
- PROBLEM SOLVING
- LANGUAGES

SUPERVISOR

- WORK FLOW TECHNIQUES
- PROCEDURES WRITING
- PLANNING AND CONDUCTING TRAINING
- PSYCHOLOGY
- MANAGEMENT

Figure 3

opportunities to work with other people--has an effect on attitude. In many companies, secretaries view their importance in relation to their assigned executive. Some secretaries view specialization of tasks and routine in a negative way. They feel that being overspecialized could lead to boredom. While it is true that word processing has been the creator of specialized repetitive jobs, it has also been responsible for eliminating boredom from other jobs. Under the traditional system, the work load was often poorly distributed--some secretaries would be busy, while others were bored, see Figure 4. Through pooling the work load, the work is more evenly distributed. People in a planned and effective work load distribution system (correspondence secretaries, administrative support secretaries, etc.) work better and usually adjust to the system better than their counterparts. One's attitude pertaining to his/her self-worth is also very important. Employees need to feel as though they are part of the company and that management cares for them as human beings. Thus, it becomes germane that the employee in a word processing center receives communication from above that they are needed and that they have worth in the eyes of the company. The secretary must also receive recognition from the people whom she/he supports.

The attitude of the work originator, i.e., the person who creates the message, or the person that I will refer to as the

TRADITIONAL	WORD PROCESSING CONCEPT
Face-to-face dictation	Automated input equipment
Transcription on standard electric typewriter	Automated output equipment
Secretaries generalists	Secretaries specialists
Report to principal	Report to Supervisor
No consistent standards for secretaries	Production standards the same for all secretaries
No specific criteria for promotion	Career paths defined
No training programs	On-going training programs
No means of even distribution of work load	Distribution of work load based on degree of experience required for jobs, and on work load of all other secretaries
No assistance during peak-load periods	Team group training provides coverage during absences; mutual cooperation during peak-load periods
No cost controls	Budgetary control of costs of user departments

Figure 4

principal throughout this paper, is also very important. Many principals do not like to use dictation equipment. Their attitudes toward equipment in many instances are very negative. It has been estimated that approximately 75% of the input into word processing centers is in longhand. The reason for this is that many executives feel comfortable when writing something on paper. They feel unencumbered in the absence of machines and people. They can think, compose and organize their thoughts much better, in their opinion, with a pencil and pad. The problem with this form of input on the part of the principal is that it is slow--an average of 15 words a minute. Legibility is also a problem. Valuable time is wasted when the secretary must interrupt her/his typing to try to figure out the longhand.

Another group of dissenters to word processing are those that would prefer person-to-person dictation. At least having a secretary take dictation is faster than longhand input. It averages out to about 30 words per minute. Many dictators like this technique since they can rely on their secretary for support in composing ideas, punctuation aids, etc. Also, many feel confidential dictation is more suitable to the person-to-person or secretary-boss relationship. However, what this group of principals is overlooking is the fact that they are taking the time of two people. Although shorthand dictation is faster than longhand input, it is much slower than machine dictation. Also,

the secretary might not be available at the moment she is needed. Another problem with person-to-person dictation relates to the continuous interruption, such as telephone calls, visitors, etc.

A good well-planned machine dictation and revision system, coordinated with a work group, is generally the most effective way to provide for input into a word processing system. Machine dictation is approximately six times faster than longhand, and approximately twice as fast as shorthand dictation. Once a manager is trained properly in the art of machine dictation, that manager usually becomes more effective in the processing of information. Machine dictation includes desk and portable pocket units and central dictation systems.

Individual dictation machines have the advantage of providing portability. These pocket-sized machines can be carried in the briefcase of most executives. Dictation can, therefore, take place in the car, the hotel room, or at home. The major disadvantage of this type of dictating equipment is that a time-lag may exist between the time that material is dictated and when the tape is delivered to the transcriptionist.

A central dictation system provides a microphone or telephone at each manager's or principal's desk. This technique provides

direct input into the word processing center. Time is thereby shortened from the initial dictation of the message to the delivery of this message to the transcriptionist.

An examination of the literature indicates that the word processing market will accelerate in the next two decades at a much faster rate than it has in the past. The reason for this acceleration is that the office cost of doing business in some industries has reached a high of 50% of the total cost. Various factors will continue to have an influence upon perpetuating "paperwork" in the offices of tomorrow. Such factors include increasing government regulation, IRS requirements, and the need for stockholders to be better informed. There are two ways to keep up with the paper explosion: one way is to hire more people (this is the method we have used in the past); the other way is to increase the productivity of our current office work force. In my opinion, the latter approach is that which will prevail. The automation of the office force will take place in four areas: (1) Dictation and typing; (2) micrographics; (3) reprographics; and (4) records retrieval. As we look at the dictation and typing (word processing area), we see many developments taking place. More and more companies are beginning to recognize the value of the dictaphone. It does not make

sense, from a cost standpoint, to tie up two people with dictation, that is the dictator and the secretary. According to Brennon in a recent article he wrote in the Office, February 1975, entitled, "Word Processing is the Beginning of the Automated Office of the Future": "Word processing systems are gaining rapid acceptance, particularly in medium size and large offices. Medium size offices have between 10 and 50 secretaries, stenos and typists. Large offices have more than 50. Dozens of large innovative corporations and institutions have word processing systems: 2500 word processing centers are operating and the total will reach 35,000 by 1978, due to rapid gains in user acceptance and continued strong promotion by vendors."

The following suggestions should help business educators to design their curriculums in both two-year and four-year colleges to meet the needs of the word processing office:

1. Most business communication is done in writing. Therefore, writing skills should still be emphasized. Basics of grammar, punctuation and spelling should be taught. Executives in the future may no longer have a secretary to correct his/her grammar or spelling.
2. Since machine dictation is more efficient than hand-written communication, instructors in business

communications courses should help students to develop dictating skills. This can be done both by providing situations whereby students can dictate their letters into a dictation machine, rather than typing them or presenting them in handwritten form. Even if the budget does not allow the hand dictation machine to be purchased, most schools have a number of tape recorders available that could be used very effectively for this purpose. A team approach should be used when students are provided with exercises in dictation. One student can dictate while the other transcribes and critiques the dictation.

When teaching dictation, instructors should pay particular attention to helping the students organize their material. This seems to be one of the common problems many executives experience with machine dictation. Another is giving them training in pronunciation, i.e., teaching them to speak clearly and distinctly. Students should be taught not to dictate with a pencil in their mouth or with their head away from the microphone. The following guidelines are helpful when dictating:

(a) Identify oneself by name and date.

(b) State the type of material, that is, letter, report or memorandum, as well as the number

of copies required and the approximate length of dictation.

(c) Spell out the name and address of the addressee, as well as any other unusual names. Any unfamiliar technical terms should also be spelled.

(d) Give a complimentary closing and the exact title one would like to have appear on the finished correspondence.

(e) Indicate if the job is rush and also if anything is to be in all capital letters. If so, say, "All caps, please."

(f) Assemble all necessary reference material on the desk in an organized manner before dictating.

3. In addition to emphasizing dictation skills in a Business Communications course, emphasis should also be given to such things as face-to-face, speaking, and form-letter design. With regard to the latter point, many efficiencies can be realized with previously prepared and stored letters and paragraphs.

4. A unit could be taught on the concept of word processing in one of the following courses: Introduction to Business, Principles of Management, or Business

Communications. This unit might emphasize the importance of word processing to business, the related cost advantages, and the role of the executive in a word processing environment.

The incorporation of the previous suggestions into curriculums will provide future executives with dictating skills that can be effectively utilized in the modern business environment. In addition, students will also have an appreciation for the cost benefits that can be derived from an effective word processing system. As more students begin to graduate from college with both an understanding of word processing and related dictating competency, hopefully we will begin to see the ratio of machine dictation input to handwritten input reversed. When this happens, business can truly begin to take advantage of the economies that word processing has to offer. Perhaps the best analogy that can be drawn to give support to teaching more about word processing is that of relating word processing of the 1970's to data processing of the 1950's. The last 20 years has brought about tremendous advances in data processing. There are probably only a few schools in this country that do not teach something about data processing. Looking 20 years forward, I believe the same statement will prevail about word processing. I doubt it very much that there will be a business graduate

from a two-year or a four-year college that will not know something about word processing. The following data should support the above comments:

1. In 1973, stand-alone word processing typewriters numbered less than 130,000. By 1980, that number is expected to increase over 500%. This means that the industry will grow from an estimated $240,000,000 in 1973 to $840,000,000 by 1980--20% compounded annually. These figures were provided by Dr. William Coggshall and Harold Marchick of Dataquest, Inc. of Palo Alto, California. Dataquest also estimates that by 1980, the yearly new additions to the word processing market will be 114,000 as opposed to 37,000 yearly in 1973.
2. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 1701, entitled, Occupational Manpower, it is estimated that by 1980, there will be a total of 710,000 word processing units installed in this country. Their breakdown is as follows: 21,000 automatic typewriters, 83,000 corresponding keyboards, 606,000 text editors.
3. Giving support to the above is a report of Stanford Research Institute which indicates that shipments of editing typewriters have been growing by 35%. By 1981, that figure is expected to grow to over 900,000.

4. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, clerical workers will be in great demand for the next two decades. The growth in personnel is expected to be 30% within the next few years, at which time word processing's prime target will be 5.25 million persons. This data was based upon an extrapolation of current trends.
5. According to a report published by Frost & Sullivan, Inc., entitled, "Word Processing in the U.S.A.," March 1975, automation of the office market by word processing equipment will reach 87% by 1984.
6. According to Radactron Corporation, the rise of the text editing typewriter market will continue on a world-wide basis. Prior to 1973, the office typewriter had more than 50% of the market. The 1978 trend projects that text editing equipment will double its percentage of the market surpassing office typewriters.

Progressive organizations which have implemented the WP/AS System have proven without a doubt that, in comparison with their traditional method of operation, this system provides secretarial support services more efficiently. Production is not only greatly increased, but also of superior quality. This, in turn, reduces costs. It would then follow that when costs are reduced, profits are increased.

As industry continues to automate the office, schools will obviously be required to prepare people who can function within this new environment. These people should not only be the individuals trained to operate the equipment, but also the managers and executives who will be charged with the responsibility of planning the effective utilization of this equipment. The drive for greater efficiency and related cost benefits will continue to transcend the business community. Business Communication educators must begin to recognize their responsibilities and prepare their students to cope with the future!